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REMARKS

Claims 3-23 and 26-31 remain in the application. Claim 31 is amended in steps (c) and (d) to overcome a rejection under 35 USC 112, as discussed below. Claim 31 is also amended in step (b) to replace "precursor" with --pre-rinse-- to be consistent with the claims. Claim 25 is canceled, since its limitations had previously been incorporated in Claim 31 as step (b) thereof. The dependencies of Claims 26, 29, and 30 are accordingly amended to depend from Claim 31.

Claims 3-23 and 25-31 are rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Claim 25 is canceled.

The Examiner contends that the claims are indefinite and/or incomplete because it is not clear how the coatings, films, layers, or residues can be subjected to a post-rinse treatment when they have already been altered and removed in the previous steps. The Examiner raises the same issue with regard to some of the dependent claims, such as Claim 25, which require additional steps applied to the coatings, films, layers, or residues after they have already been altered.

As clearly stated in step (d) of Claim 31, the coatings, films, layers, or residues are subjected to a post-rinse treatment to remove "any residual organic material from said substrates remaining after said solvent rinse". Applicants submit that there is no indefiniteness in reciting a step that is followed only if there are any residues which remain after the rinse step (step (2)). If there are no such residues, then there is no need to carry out any post-rinse treatment; this is supported by the specification and is clearly recited in the claim language.

Claim 25 is canceled, as being redundant in view of step (b) of Claim 31.

Claim 31 is amended in steps (c) and (d) to replace "physically or chemically altered" with --reacted and unreacted-- as regards "organic material". This language is fully supported in the specification on page 18, lines 1-5.

Reconsideration of the rejection of Claims 3-23 and 26-31, as amended, under 35 USC 112, second paragraph is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is correct in assuming that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made.

Claims 3-23 and 25-31 remain rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gupta et al (U.S. Patent 5,037,506) in view of Hawley's Condensed Chemical Dictionary, in view of Mayer et al (U.S. Patent 3,893,869) and further in view of Nachshon (U.S. Patent

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5,114,834), Engelsberg ("Laser-Assisted Cleaning Proves Promising"), WO 97/17164, WO 95/07152, Engelsberg (U.S. Patent 5,024,968) and Engelsberg et al (U.S. Patents 5,643,472 and 5,531,857).

Applicants have extensively discussed the foregoing references in their previous responses to earlier Office Actions, and the arguments made therein obtain here as well. The claims are amended herein to overcome the rejection under 35 USC 112 and thereby narrow the issues for appeal.

Reconsideration of the rejection of Claims 3-23 and 26-31, as amended, under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gupta et al in view of Hawley's Condensed Chemical Dictionary, in view of Mayer et al and further in view of Nachshon, Engelsberg ("Laser-Assisted Cleaning Proves Promising"), WO 97/17164, WO 95/07152, Engelsberg, and Engelsberg et al is respectfully requested.

The foregoing amendments and arguments are submitted to place the application in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to take such action. If the Examiner has any questions, he is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
AHMAD (NMI) WALEH ET AL

July 31, 2003

David W. Collins

David W. Collins
Attorney for Applicants
Registration No. 26,857

75 West Calle de las Tiendas
Suite 125B
Green Valley, AZ 85614

Telephone calls may be made to:
(520) 399-3203